

Claims:

1. A process for extracting a composition comprising a biologically active compound or a precursor thereof from a raw material containing such a compound or precursor as a constituent part, which process comprises the steps of (1) contacting a sample of the raw material with an extraction solvent comprising a C₁₋₄ (hydro)fluorocarbon, and (2) separating the solvent liquor thus obtained containing the extract from the raw material.
2. A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the composition to be extracted comprises a pesticide or a precursor thereof.
3. A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the composition to be extracted comprises a pharmaceutically active substance or a precursor thereof.
4. A process as claimed in claim 3 wherein the composition to be extracted comprises a penicillin, an alkaloid, paclitaxel, monensin or cytochalasin.
5. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent in addition to the C₁₋₄ (hydro)fluorocarbon.
6. A process for extracting a compound or composition of matter from a raw material containing that compound or composition as a constituent part, which process comprises the steps of (1) contacting a sample of the raw material with an extraction solvent comprising a C₁₋₄ (hydro)fluorocarbon and a co-solvent, and (2) separating the solvent liquor thus obtained containing the extract from the raw material.
7. A process for extracting a natural product from a plant material containing that product as a constituent part, which process comprises the steps of (1) contacting a sample of the plant material with an extraction solvent comprising a C₁₋₄ (hydro)fluorocarbon and a co-solvent, and (2) separating the solvent liquor thus obtained containing the extract from the plant material.

8. A process as claimed in claim 7 wherein the natural product is a flavoured or aromatic oil.

9. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point of 15°C or below.

10. A process as claimed in claim 9 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point in the range of from -85 to 15°C.

11. A process as claimed in claim 9 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point of 0°C or below.

12. A process as claimed in claim 11 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point in the range of from -85 to 0°C.

13. A process as claimed in claim 9 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point of -10°C or below.

14. A process as claimed in claim 13 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a (hydro)fluorocarbon having a boiling point in the range of from -70 to -10°C.

15. A process as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the extraction solvent comprises a C₁₋₄ hydrofluorocarbon.

16. A process as claimed in claim 15 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a C₁₋₃ hydrofluorocarbon.

17. A process as claimed in claim 16 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a C₁₋₃ hydrofluorocarbon selected from the hydrofluoromethanes, the hydrofluoroethanes and the hydrofluoropropanes.

18. A process as claimed in claim 17 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a hydrofluoroethane.

19. A process as claimed in claim 18 wherein the extraction solvent comprises 1,1,1,2-tetrafluoroethane.

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20. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 19 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point of 20°C or below.

21. A process as claimed in claim 20 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point in the range of from -85 to 20°C.

22. A process as claimed in claim 20 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point of 10°C or below.

23. A process as claimed in claim 22 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point in the range of from -70 to 10°C.

24. A process as claimed in claim 20 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point of 0°C or below.

25. A process as claimed in claim 24 wherein the extraction solvent comprises a co-solvent having a boiling point in the range of from -60 to 0°C.

26. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 25 wherein the co-solvent is a C₂₋₆ hydrocarbon.

27. A process as claimed in claim 26 wherein the co-solvent is a C₂₋₄ hydrocarbon.

28. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 27 wherein the co-solvent is an alkane.

29. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 25 wherein the co-solvent is a hydrocarbon ether.

30. A process as claimed in claim 29 wherein the co-solvent is a dialkyl ether.

31. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 25 wherein the co-solvent is dimethyl ether, butane or a mixture thereof.

32. A process as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 31 wherein the extraction solvent comprises from 50.0 to 99.5 % by weight of the C₁₋₄ (hydro)fluorocarbon and from 50.0 to 0.5 % by weight of the co-solvent.

33. A composition comprising a biologically active compound obtained from a raw material product using the extraction process of claim 1.

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34. A composition comprising a pharmaceutically active substance obtained from a raw material product using the extraction process of claim 3.

35. A composition comprising a pesticide obtained from a raw material product using the extraction process of claim 2.

36. A natural product obtained from a plant material using the extraction process of claim 7.

37. A flavoured or aromatic oil obtained from a plant material using the extraction process of claim 8.

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